



# Branching Out

Creating Connections to End Sexual Violence

Fall 2020

Volume 14, Issue 2

## ***Big Changes on the Horizon for Sexual Assault Services***

By Karen Fetherston with an intro by Samantha Sustachek



Karen Fetherston



Samantha Sustachek

*Although it is no secret that Sexual Assault Services has undergone a number of changes and transitions over the past two years, something really big is on the horizon. As of the publication of this newsletter, SAS is still operating under a fiscal sponsorship by Focus on Community, but the program is being guided toward independence under the direction of Interim Executive Director, Karen Fetherston. Many of you may already know Karen, and she is no stranger to SAS, having coordinated SAS's sister program, Stop Child Abuse and Neglect (SCAN) for 20 years. Over the past few months, Karen has assembled a Board of Directors, written policies and procedures, and filed a LOT of paperwork. Over the next six to eight months, support services will be put in place, a permanent Executive Director will be chosen, and SAS will officially separate from Focus on Community. But I will let Karen tell you the rest...*

Sexual Assault Services is Racine's rape crisis center. SAS has been operating in the community under that name for the past 20 years, initially as a program of Lutheran Social Services and more recently as an associate of Focus on Community. But exciting changes are ahead in July 2021 when SAS will become an independent nonprofit under the new name of BeLEAF Survivors.

Like SAS, BeLEAF will seek to provide a safe and compassionate environment to promote hope and healing after sexual assault. The "LEAF" portion of BeLEAF means lifting, empowering, advocating, and fighting for survivors, allies, and a culture of consent. BeLEAF staff and location will remain unchanged and all SAS services will continue uninterrupted. These include:

**CRISIS INTERVENTION** is staffed with a 24-hour crisis line and 24-hour hospital response teams to support survivors when they present at the ER for a SANE exam.

**PERSONAL ADVOCACY** is given to assist survivors applying for public benefits, intervening with an employer or landlord, helping secure housing or employment, etc.

**LEGAL ADVOCACY** supports survivors while navigating the criminal justice system, filing restraining orders, providing guidance with immigration issues, etc.

**FAMILY ADVOCACY** supports families at the Racine County Child Advocacy Center who are there for interviews and/ or medical exams pertaining to a child abuse investigation.

Cont. on page 2

### Inside This Issue

Support Groups.....Page 2

Rompiendo la Barrera &  
Program Statistics.....Page 3

Family Advocate &  
Award Winners.....Page 4

Face to Face.....Page 5

Helping Hands.....Page 6



# Support Groups

By Vicki Biehn

---

## Same Support, New Delivery Method Survivor Support Groups

Sexual Assault Services (SAS) has provided in person support group services to sexual assault survivors and caregivers for almost 20 years. Throughout the years, SAS has facilitated support groups for adult female survivors of sexual assault/abuse, for adolescent female sexual assault/abuse survivors, and for caregivers whose children were sexually abused. Support groups are a key service that SAS provides, because attending a support group is a powerful means for survivors to heal.

Clinical psychologist, Dr. David Susman, has reported on some of the benefits of attending a support group. These benefits include realizing that you are not alone. Being with other individuals who have experienced something similar is a powerful feeling, which can ease the perception that an individual is the only one who feels or thinks a certain way. This is often a relief for sexual assault survivors. Groups also offer a place for members to share their feelings in a safe, non-judgmental, and supportive environment, which can be therapeutic and healing. Attending a support group is also a way to gain valuable knowledge on coping strategies and skills from other survivors. Participating in a support group is a way to gain a sense of hope, which is essential for healing from trauma. The group experience also commonly helps members to gain a better sense of understanding and insight into their own responses and reactions to the trauma, which can assist survivors in their daily lives. Lastly, being in a support group gives members the opportunity to provide help and assistance to others, which is healing for all. I have facilitated support groups for SAS and can personally attest to the validity of the aforementioned benefits of participating in a support group.

Although this pandemic has made it unsafe for SAS to hold in person support groups, SAS was determined to continue to find a way for the survivors in our community to gain the benefits of attending a support group. With that goal in mind, SAS started our first ever virtual support group on Monday, September 21st. This is a group for adult women who were sexually abused or assaulted. The group meets every Monday evening from 6-7:30pm on a platform called Doxy. This platform is confidential and operates similarly to Zoom. Each member joins the meeting at 6 pm and each member can see the other group members via a small box on their computer or

phone screen. We started the group with six members and two facilitators, but unfortunately, one of the group members was unable to continue with the group due to challenges with her internet connection – one of a few challenges with this new virtual format. I know that I miss the face-to-face interaction of an in person support group, but I feel that the group members are still gaining many of the benefits of a support group, even virtually. The last group will be on Monday, December 7th, and at this point, I feel that the first virtual support group was successful! SAS is hoping to start a teen survivor group early next year. If you are interested in learning more about our services or upcoming support groups, please contact Vicki Biehn at [vbiehn@focusracine.org](mailto:vbiehn@focusracine.org) or (262) 619-1634.

—Vicki

---

Cont. from page 1

**COUNSELING** is available to individuals, couples, families, and groups and is open to survivors and support people. All therapy is provided by two licensed, Masters level therapists from the Racine and Burlington offices, schools, correctional institutions, or other offsite locations.

**INFORMATION AND REFERRAL** to other community programs and supports is provided. When we cannot provide a needed service to an individual, we refer that individual to someone who can.

**BILINGUAL SERVICES** are provided. The Bilingual Outreach Advocate and the Bilingual Therapist provide services in Spanish, providing access to all program services by the sizable Spanish speaking population of our community.

**OUTREACH** makes connections with and provides presentations and materials to other agencies and programs in the community and receives referrals for service from those sources. SAS also engages in digital outreach through various social media platforms.

**COMMUNITY AWARENESS AND EDUCATION** includes public events and educational presentations to raise community awareness of issues surrounding sexual violence and to develop our community's compassionate response to sexual assault survivors.

In the upcoming months, when you hear the name BeLEAF Survivors or see our new logo (see page 6), remember that it represents the continuation of SAS's good works in the community starting in July 2021. Special thanks to the people who have become our inaugural volunteer board helping form our new governance, particularly the Executive Committee: Shelley Hickman (President), Laura Jablonski (V. President), Lora Reinders (Treasurer), Shelley Andersen (Secretary), and Rachel Cortez (Member at large).

—Karen



# Rompiendo la Barrera

*Breaking the Barrier*

By Annabell Bustillos

## In Search of Bilingual-Spanish Speaking Volunteers

Sexual Assault Services (SAS) is searching for Bilingual-Spanish speaking volunteers. Here at SAS, we strive to provide culturally competent services to the people we serve. Part of my job as the Bilingual Outreach Advocate is to help make this a reality for our Spanish speaking victims and their support people. To accomplish this, I need help from other bilingual individuals. The more Spanish speaking volunteers we have, the richer cultural diversity we can create.

Racine and the United States as a whole have a large Hispanic/Latino population. The Census Bureau estimates there were roughly [60.6 million Hispanics](#) in the United States as of July 1, 2019, making up 18% of the total national population. This population encompasses a combination of many subcultures that can come from over two dozen countries of origin. Within these subcultures there is a sizeable number of Spanish dialects. My goal is to achieve a greater number of Spanish speaking volunteers to not only help bridge language and cultural obstacles to better serve this population, but also to have individuals who can help respond to the hospital when a Spanish speaking sexual assault victim or support person seeks medical help. Additional bilingual volunteers would also allow SAS to expand its Spanish warmline.

Currently, our hospital response is dependent on the availability of one bilingual advocate, and the warmline is available to Spanish speaking survivors only during normal business days and times (Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.). Having accessible services for Spanish speaking survivors at the hospital and available via phone is very important. Being able to speak to someone in your own language about your story or your fears or thoughts can be very comforting for survivors and their support people. To achieve this goal, SAS needs Spanish speaking individuals to train to become volunteer advocates. Hopefully, as our bilingual volunteer pool increases so will our hospital response availability, as well as our warmline days and hours.

Hospitals are required to provide interpreters, but interpreters are not advocates. Interpreters are trained to interpret exact words and may not be able to establish the same rapport that a trained advocate builds with a victim. They are also not trained to be sensitive to the unique experiences of sexual assault victims, whereas an advocate gets special training on

the specific needs of sexual assault victims. Interpreters are a wonderful resource and should definitely be used, especially when a bilingual advocate is not available. However, when a person has just gone through a traumatic and confusing experience, having an advocate who understands them directly can be very comforting. Therefore, having bilingual advocates is always preferable and is a very important and needed resource.

An advocate, regardless of the language they speak, plays an important role in a victim's hospital visit. Compassion and support go beyond language. SAS volunteer training is currently being conducted completely virtually. If you, or anyone you know is interested in volunteering, regardless of whether they are bilingual or monolingual, please contact Scarlett Kinderman at (262) 619-1634 ext. 18 or via email at [skinderman@focusracine.org](mailto:skinderman@focusracine.org).

To find out more about SAS's bilingual services please contact me (Annabell Bustillos) at (262) 619-1634 ext. 14 or via email at [abustillos@focusracine.org](mailto:abustillos@focusracine.org).

—Annabell



It won't be safe to gather for SAS's annual wine tasting this January, but we hope you'll plan to spend your Valentine's or Galentine's Day with us.

You won't want to miss our Sip and Dip fundraiser...coming soon! Included in your experience will be tasty wine, decadent chocolate, and some local entertainment thrown in for good measure. Watch for details coming in January. Supplies will be limited, so register early, and plan to indulge for a good cause!

## SAS Program Statistics

January-June 2020

Crisis Line Calls.....	99
Racine Hospital Visits.....	32
Burlington Hospital Visits.....	4
Legal Advocacy Sessions.....	53
CAC Appointments.....	56
Counseling Sessions.....	526
Support Group Sessions.....	0
Community Presentations.....	11



# Family Advocate

By Christa Dasher

With the continuing COVID-19 pandemic, going to movies has not been an option for many people. I know I have spent more time streaming movies for personal as well as professional development. I want to take the opportunity to use my article to share with you some of the films related to the topics of sexual abuse and assault I have found interesting. While this may not be the first topic you would choose to watch a film about, many of these films can help us better understand survivors' experiences and challenges when dealing with their assaults. Due to the nature of the sexual assault topic and the details given in some of the stories, I feel it is necessary to provide a trigger warning. If you or someone close to you has been a victim of sexual violence, be sure to know your limits and reach out for support if you feel you need to discuss your feelings. Below is my list of a few films that are available for streaming that I have watched that I would recommend.

*Unbelievable*—2019 (Netflix)

[Trailer](#)

*Unbelievable* is a TV miniseries that is based on the true story of Marie Adler (Kaitlyn Dever), who was charged with filing a false sexual assault report after reporting a sexual assault. After similar rapes are reported, patterns begin to emerge. Two female detectives, Grace Rasmussen (Toni Collette) and Karen Duvall (Merritt Wever) investigate the cases, and the truth starts to be revealed. I feel that this series does a great job illustrating the challenges survivors face when reporting their assaults and how difficulties with memory following an assault can often be mistaken for the survivor lying.

*Audrie and Daisy*—2016 (Netflix)

[Trailer](#)

*Audrie and Daisy* is a documentary about the sexual assault of two high school girls, Audrie Pott and Daisy Coleman. The film follows the aftermath of the assaults and describes the cyberbullying and harassment by their peers and community faced by the girls and their families. The film illustrates the victim-blaming surrounding sexual assault survivors and shines a light on the link between suicide and sexual assault. Audrie Pott took her life nine days after her assault, and Daisy Coleman died by suicide in August of this year.

*Athlete A*—2020 (Netflix)

[Trailer](#)

*Athlete A* is a documentary that tells the story of the Indianapolis Star reporters who broke the news of sexual abuse of young female gymnasts by doctor Larry Nassar and the cover-up by Team USA gymnastics. The film shows how certain toxic environments and beliefs can perpetuate sexual violence and how grooming can take place. Several gymnasts tell their stories of abuse by Larry Nassar and their experiences.

*The Tale*—2018 (HBO Max, Available to rent on Amazon, Vudu, Fandango)

[Trailer](#)

*The Tale* is based on the true story of the director and producer Jennifer Fox (Laura Dern) and the sexual abuse she experienced at the hand of her riding coach Mrs. G. (Elizabeth Debicki) and her running coach Bill (Jason Ritter). She comes to realize that what she considered to be a consensual relationship with an older boyfriend is actually sexual abuse. This film illustrates how grooming occurs with child sexual abuse and how it is common for teens to mistake child sexual abuse for being in a relationship.

—Christa

## Recognizing 11th Annual SAAM Award Winners

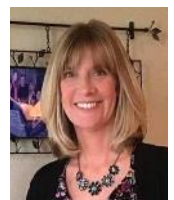
When COVID-19 significantly disrupted all of our lives back in March, SAS almost immediately rescheduled our annual Seeds of Change luncheon, which had been planned for April 1, 2020. We intended to hold it in September instead, but as the pandemic dragged on, it became increasingly clear that it would not be safe to gather a group in 2020, and we made the difficult decision to cancel altogether.

The hardest part of that decision was knowing that we would not be able to recognize our 11th annual SAAM award winners in person. Instead, we have had to rely on print and social media to get the word out about this year's very worthy recipients. We thank them for all they have done and continue to do for SAS!



Jason Meekma

The 11th annual Star of Courage Community Member Award went to Jason Meekma, Executive Director of Focus on Community. Read more about Jason's contributions [here](#).



Diane Woolley

The 11th annual Star of Hope Volunteer Award went to Diane Woolley. Read more about Diane's contributions [here](#).





# Face to Face

By Kari Wilder

---

## Human Trafficking, Sexual Exploitation, and COVID-19

There is no denying that 2020 has been a difficult year. No one was prepared for a global pandemic which would impact us all and change so much of how we live and move through our lives. It has also vastly impacted members of our society who were already vulnerable to some of the worst evils of our world. It has created circumstances that increase the risk of human trafficking and sexual exploitation, made it difficult to identify those being trafficked or abused, and made it harder for victims of sexual abuse to receive services.

The economic impact of the pandemic on households all over the world has been tremendous. Over 81% of the global workforce has experienced full or partial unemployment. With so many people unemployed and struggling to keep a roof over their heads, people are more likely to find other means to supplement their income. Individuals are more willing to accept riskier job offers which can leave them vulnerable to labor trafficking. Many have also turned to sex work. OnlyFans, a website where content creators can earn money from users who subscribe to their content, has seen a 75% increase in use since March 2020. While this content can be anything from lifestyle blogs to workout videos, it has become increasingly popular with sex workers. OnlyFans requires users to be at least 18 years old, so Twitter and Snapchat are more popular with underage users with hashtags like #Nudes4Sale and #BuyMyNudes often trending on Twitter. Under normal circumstances, many teens and women would avoid meeting up with people they met online or at least attempt to meet in public places where they feel safer, the pandemic has taken away some of these safety measures. People are more willing to meet up if the trafficker offers lodging or enough money, and since many public places were closed during the beginning of the shutdown, they were often meeting in less public places where they are more vulnerable.

Unfortunately, some individuals do not just profit off their own bodies. Anti-trafficking organizations are also seeing an increase in familial trafficking, including things like child marriage and labor trafficking. These families are trying to reduce the number of mouths they need to feed and to generate income at the same time. Also, because adults are staying home and spending more time online, the online sexual exploitation of children has been on the rise. Some of these adults staying at home are looking for child pornography, which has created

an increased demand. Traffickers and producers of child pornography who have access to children within their homes may increase the frequency and severity of the abuse of these children in order to fulfill these demands. They may also expand into new forms of abuse including livestreaming themselves or someone else sexually assaulting a child. Children are also being exploited by individuals who do not live in their homes. Since children are also spending more time online, their chances of being groomed by an online predator have increased. Many parents may be unaware of which apps or websites their children are using and visiting. The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children reported a 98.66% increase in the number of reports they have received regarding “online enticement” between January 2020 and September 2020 compared with the same period in 2019.<sup>1</sup> Traffickers have also been using TikTok to find potential victims. There are videos on the app of young-looking women flashing cash and expensive clothing, encouraging teens to message them if they would also like to make money and live a similar extravagant lifestyle. These traffickers are also active on Twitter and Snapchat where they may either pretend to be someone they are not, which is known as catfishing, or they may try to convince children to trust them and send them pictures.

While the abuse and the number of sexual assault and human trafficking survivors has increased, the access to support and mandated reporters has decreased. Many children are learning virtually which has removed their access to teachers and other education personnel who might identify that they are being abused. Individuals are also less likely to visit doctors unless they are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, so doctors are also less likely to be able to identify if a child or adult is being abused or trafficked. Childcare facilities across the nation have also temporarily or permanently closed their doors, cutting off yet another avenue to adults who may identify children who are being abused. Additionally, organizations created to serve human trafficking and sexual abuse survivors have experienced a shift in how they provide services, and for many agencies that means temporarily halting services, leaving many survivors with nowhere to turn. Some of these same agencies have experienced a loss of funding causing them to close and leaving many communities without resources at all.

This pandemic has revealed and exacerbated various inequalities in our society. It has exposed cracks in the systems we have in place to keep vulnerable children and adults safe from sexual abuse and human trafficking. This should be used as a learning experience. As we find ways to function during and eventually recover from the pandemic, the impact on the most exposed members of our society should not be forgotten. Human trafficking and its growth during the pandemic is the result of the failures in our economies and societies to protect the most vulnerable. COVID-19 is a reminder that we need to do better.

—Kari

---

<sup>1</sup><https://www.missingkids.org/blog/2020/covid-19-and-missing-and-exploited-children#>



# Helping Hands

By Scarlett Kinderman

Please welcome Brea Quadracci as a new volunteer for Sexual Assault Services of Racine. She officially joined SAS in June of 2020. To learn a little bit more about Brea, read the interview below.

## **Tell us a little bit about yourself Brea.**

Professionally, I first got a degree in graphic design, and then I wanted to help people, so I went through and got a human service degree. I have worked with that degree for a couple of agencies including: The Racine Friendship Clubhouse, The Hopes Center, The Women's Resource Center, Halo, the Hospitality Center, and I volunteered other places as well. I have also done a few groups at McMynn Towers.

Currently, I am involved here with Sexual Assault Services as a crisis advocate, and I am in school as well. I actually just finished my Bachelors for behavioral science and am in school for my Masters in clinical counseling at Parkside. I actually just started that.

I have a passion to help people in crisis. I feel a deep calling for this work, and even if I doubt myself, it has always been rewarding. I know I am on the right path and, I think that is very important in life to know that.

## **How did you hear about Sexual Assault Services of Racine County?**

When I had my Wellness program at The Women's Resource Center, I reached out to the community to help the women in house and at the shelter with different support groups and counseling. Sexual Assault Services was one of my community outreaches that I did. I contacted them, and they would come in as counselors and help the women in domestic violence on site, which was amazing. So that is how I first met them professionally through similar agencies - by having them come into the domestic violence shelter.

## **What made you feel that volunteering with Sexual Assault Services of Racine County was the right choice for you?**

I felt that our clientele that I was working with at the domestic violence shelter was very similar to Sexual Assault Services. I have a calling to help people who are in crisis, so it just made

sense, and I was going back for my Masters degree, and I wanted to take a little bit of time off. I thought it would be great to help people while I am doing my Masters. Hopefully, I can keep volunteering once I become a counselor too.

## **What do you hope to gain from volunteering and working with Sexual Assault Services of Racine County long-term?**

To be able to stay relevant and to be able to help people in sexual assault or crisis. To be able to learn new skills and keep helping those because I think in our community there's only certain people that can do crisis work like this. I know I have that gift. I think it would be almost against my principles not to use it if I am able to do it. Morally I feel that I have obligations, because I am a crisis worker and I can help.

## **You have already worked with Sexual Assault Services of Racine County on a couple of special volunteer opportunities. Do you want to share a little bit about that for the readers?**

I am doing a meditation group this month (occurred in September) that is guided journaling techniques for anyone that wants to have some relief a little bit emotionally or through meditation. I am working to have meditation brought a little more mainstream. The last six years that has been a huge goal of mine to bring meditation more into the mainstream. I always like to use mediation in my career from day one and teach it to others.

## **We are so grateful you wanted to join our organization. Do you have anything else you would like to add?**

I think you guys are wonderful, and I am happy to be a part of Sexual Assault Services. I learn something every time I volunteer or meet with you guys. I think that my life is always about learning and growing and you guys help me grow in my line of work.

For more information about volunteer opportunities with SAS or to sign up for the next volunteer training, contact Scarlett Kinderman at (262) 619-1634 ext. 18 or [skinderman@focusracine.org](mailto:skinderman@focusracine.org).

—Scarlette

Introducing the BeLEAF Survivors logo!





Sexual Assault Services  
2000 Domanik Dr. 4th Floor  
Racine, WI 53404

### Contact Us!

SAS Racine Office  
2000 Domanik Dr. 4th Floor  
Racine, WI 53404  
262-619-1634

SAS Burlington Office  
480 S. Pine St.  
Burlington, WI 53105  
262-763-6226 Ext. 109

24 Hour Crisis Line: 262-637-SAFE (7233)  
Spanish Warm Line: 262-424-3134 (M-F 8a-5p)  
Website: <http://www.sasofracine.org>

### Stay Connected!



Join our News and Events email update list! Would you like to receive information on upcoming SAS events and volunteer opportunities? Email Samantha Sustachek at [ssustachek@focusracine.org](mailto:ssustachek@focusracine.org) with "SAS news and events" in the subject line and she will include you in all SAS news and events related emails.

---

*Sexual Assault Services seeks to create a safe and compassionate environment to help promote the healing of sexual assault survivors and their support people.*

*Sexual Assault Services is funded by United Way of Racine County, Victims of Crime Act grant, Sexual Assault Victim Services grant, the Racine Dominican Mission Fund, the Racine Community Foundation, and the support of generous local donors.*

